
U.S. Department of Justice



United States Attorney's Office Eastern District of Virginia

Chuck Rosenberg - United States Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 8 , 2006

Contacts: Deanna Warren
Phone: (757) 441-6331
Jim Rybicki, Public Information Officer
Phone: (703) 842-4050
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Virginia Beach Man Convicted of Discharging Firearm During Drug Deal Gone Bad

(Norfolk, VA) - Matthew Scott Collins, age 22, of Virginia Beach, was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to discharging a firearm during a drug deal gone bad. In addition, Collins also pled guilty to conspiracy to obtain firearms through "straw" purchases to avoid the prohibition on possession of firearms by convicted felons. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, made the announcement after Collins was sentenced at the United States District Court in Norfolk.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) determined, as a result of an investigation into "straw" purchases of firearms in the Hampton Roads area, that Collins was the lead drug dealer involved in a shootout at a Virginia Beach Harris Teeter parking lot on February 20, 2005. Collins, who admitted distributing cocaine and marijuana in his plea, set up a sale of fake cocaine to a customer. During the transaction, Collins fired a .380 caliber semiautomatic pistol after the buyer realized the cocaine was fake.

The case was prosecuted under Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)/EXILE, a federal program that uses a joint federal and state multi-agency approach to targeting armed criminals for prosecution in federal court for possession or use of firearms in violation of federal laws. It is a nationwide effort by the U.S. Department of Justice aimed at reducing violent crimes. Since its inception in Hampton Roads, Project PSN/EXILE has produced more than 1,128 convictions and removed more than 1,902 firearms from armed criminals.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James A. Metcalfe.